



**Office of Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan
58th Ohio House District**

May 26th, 2020

Kimberly Hall, Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Director Hall,

I am writing to you today conveying the need and urgency for a resolution to address issues with Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for those who have been subjected to penalty weeks under traditional unemployment insurance.

Mahoning Valley has been uniquely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Already an economically distressed area before this crisis, my hardworking constituents are struggling to make ends meet. For months, my office has heard the stories: a mother desperate to provide for her son with a disability, a father exhausting credit to pay the bills, a part-time retiree who needs that extra hundred dollars for unexpected medical expenses, and others. I know you have too, and I'm grateful for your staff's responsiveness in helping us to understand options and next steps to relieve them of this worry. I know this is an overwhelming time.

It is not my intention to request the waiver of penalty weeks that have been assigned by ODJFS, nor is it to suggest an alternative policy to enable receipt of benefits to these individuals. I am simply requesting a timeline on the implementation of the law as it is written to expand benefits to those who have recouped the state for previous overpayments, and an acknowledgment from ODJFS that those experiencing a layoff due to COVID-19, who would otherwise be working, will be able to apply for the PUA benefits they deserve as soon as possible.

I urge you to give full and fair consideration to our struggling constituents who are trying to make ends meet.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Lepore-Hagan".

Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan
Ohio House District 58

133rd General Assembly Committee Assignments

Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor, Ranking Member
Health
Transportation and Public Safety

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